

ALONIM

Newsletter of the Bristol & West
Progressive Jewish Congregation



Elul, Tishrei, Cheshvan, Kislev 5774/5
September, October, November 2014



Autumn Issue

 ALONIM & calendar copy deadlines

Month	Copy date
Synagogue calendar	Third Sunday in the month
Winter Alonim	Early November

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ALONIM Contributions & Editorial Policy.

The editorial policy is to encourage contributions from all Synagogue members and  **ALONIM** readers, concerning any aspects of communal and Jewish life, including cultural and communal reviews, information concerning synagogue activities, letters and feedback and articles of Jewish cultural and religious interest. Typically, contributions of approximately **500 words** are preferred, and PC format submission by e-mail is particularly appreciated.

The editor will NOT print anonymous or unattributed articles. Contributors are asked to be aware of the need to protect the copyright of others. Opinions expressed in  **ALONIM** do not necessarily reflect those of the synagogue Council or the Editors.

Contributions and communications can be sent directly to the **Editor** at alonim@bwpjc.org. For postal contributions please contact the editor on **0117 907 8922**. If you are intending to

Raise funds for BWPJC! www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/bwpjc

Editorial

Sheila Brill, Editor



Thanks to everyone who contributed to this edition. Usually we have Rebecca Lissak's insightful analysis into one of the Psalms. As Rebecca is now doing her own independent study, she no longer has time to write for Alonim. We are very grateful for all her past hard work.

Hers are big shoes to fill – anyone interested?

Many of you will be reading Alonim online via our amazing new website, thanks to the labours of Ruth Weinberger and Miranda Harris.

Judy Goldsmith and I wish you all a very good and healthy New Year.

Membership News

**Sheila Wilson,
Membership Secretary**



With the High Holy Days coming up soon it's time for members to do some "housekeeping" and sort out any outstanding synagogue membership invoices as well as letting me and Miranda know if there are any changes to your contact details so we can keep our records up to date.

Let me take this opportunity to wish you all a sweet, healthy and happy New Year. Shana Tova and a Gut Yontif.

A warm welcome to our new members - Amy Lobl, Yana

Yivsiyevich and Jermaine Smith. I'm sure you will find strength, comfort and friendship in our community.

Many congratulations to Miriam Patrick and her daughter, Beth, for Beth's graduation with a BA in Film Studies.

Mazel tov to Philippa and Darren Gordon on their 10th wedding anniversary in August and to Elie Ben-Shlomo who has gained a place at Cambridge University studying Maths.

We wish long life to Irit Canzini and her family as well as Steve Harris and Ruth Squire and their families on the deaths of their respective fathers.

Also, to Jonathan Bamber and family, and David Memel and

family, on the loss of their respective mothers.

We also wish long life to the family of Professor Louis Solomon, a member of our congregation.

Many of our members have not been very well recently. We wish Peter Hyams, Bernard

Barnett, Josephine Brill and Melly Facey good health for the year ahead.

I'm sorry if I've not mentioned you and you've been unwell. I'm not always that well informed plus, my memory is not what it used to be.

Letter from the Chair

Ben Weinberger



Shanah Tovah. While I was away from Bristol for three weeks, I felt a bit out of touch with all that was going on back at home; I still checked email regularly and even made phone calls to Bristol (I recently changed the plan on my mobile and it includes free phone calls back to the UK even when outside the country). Still, because I was not there in person, I felt like I was missing out. Some of our members find it difficult to get to synagogue with the regularity they would prefer. We continue to try and find ways to improve our communications to help everyone feel part of the community; we send a quarterly newsletter (Alonim), weekly

email updates, and have recently updated our website (with a community calendar as well as a new members-only area filled with information). These are all helpful, but, we mustn't lose track of the personal element (visiting people, sending cards or speaking on the phone) that is at the heart of what our synagogue community is all about.

We recently decided to reduce the printing costs for Alonim; there were always extra copies left-over and printing and postage has a cost. The synagogue is running a significant deficit and it's important that we find ways to minimize costs where possible. This seemed like an easy win given the nature of electronic communication today. After trialling the new method, we received some feedback from a few key people who discussed the

intangible benefits of sending printed copies (people share them, leave them at community organisations where potential new members might see them, etc.). Though similar things can be done with electronic copies (and will be done), those other benefits are also justified such that we should try to find a way to print (in addition to send electronically) sufficient copies. There is still the cost. As such, it strikes me that it's important we find a way to generate revenue to cover that cost – perhaps through advertising or sponsorship. This is but one part of a larger discussion currently underway at Council with regard to revenue and expenses.

As I have mentioned previously, and as anyone who attended last year's AGM will know, the synagogue is running a deficit. Council has had, and continues to

have, active discussions about how to address it. It will require fund-raising and finding other methods of increasing revenues. It's not a simple task, but it's certainly a worthwhile one. It's a sizeable deficit, but not an insurmountable one. We have members who have already expressed their desire to help fundraise. A member of Council is organising a committee for just that purpose and, if you'd like to help, please let us know. We have a great community and a very active one with many people already contributing to the operation of the synagogue in a variety of ways. I am confident that we will address the budget issue now that it is a key topic of discussion and we are making it a priority to do so. Please keep your eye out for further information and, if you have ideas for fundraising, please don't hesitate to get involved.

Challah available for you!

East Bristol Bakery (which is our new challah provider at synagogue) also bake challah regularly on a Friday for sale in their shop. To be sure of being able to buy one of these challah beauties, put in an order by Thursday of that week.

Contact alex.poulter@gmail.com or eastbriskbakery.tumblr.com or @eastbriskbakery on twitter. Tel: 07542 198209. 112 St Marks Rd BS5 6JD

Dancing to the Beat of a Jewish Heart

Rabbi Monique Mayer



There is an unspoken and oft-whispered rule in our community that we keep conversation around Israel and Palestine outside the synagogue walls. People want to preserve the synagogue as a sanctuary, a haven where we can escape from whatever might be happening in the Middle East. The fear is that if we talk, tempers will flare again as they have in the past, creating factions and rifts that feel as though they could tear our community apart. We continue to pray together, offer hopes for peace, but we avoid any discussion of what is happening – talking has been deemed “not safe”. On the surface, this strategy appears to have worked; but as I have watched and listened, it has become painfully clear that it will only be a matter of time before attempts to keep difficult conversations out of our communal and spiritual home will backfire.

This summer, against an exploding conflict of increasing rocket fire

into Israel and mounting civilian casualties in Gaza, emotions and tensions in our community began to surface. In response, I was moved to write and deliver a sermon to express what was happening, a sermon called “The Elephant” (see p.36). Responses to “The Elephant” confirmed that the situation in Israel and Gaza has generated a sense of powerlessness, frustration and anguish. Sides have been taken, lines have been drawn, and each side has accused the other of immorality, terrorism, and murder. The polarised and vitriolic language running rampant in the press and social media have amplified the anger and confusion. While 2300 miles away, people continue to fight and die and live in fear for their lives, in our part of the world the war has become personal, challenging our understandings of democracy, freedom, oppression, occupation, and security; and causing divides between friends. The voice of reason is only viewed as “reasonable” if the voice confirms one’s own viewpoint.

Perhaps it’s not a coincidence that we are now in the month of Elul, the month of self-reflection and preparation leading up to the holiest days of the Jewish calendar. Turning the pages of *Machzor Ruach*

Chadashah, my eyes fell on the *Al Cheit*, a catalogue of sins recited on *Yom Kippur*, pgs. 259-261. In particular, my attention was drawn to the following:

*For the sin we have committed
against You by our words.*

*For the sin we have committed
against You by hardening our
hearts.*

*For the sin we have committed
against You by showing
contempt.*

These sins of words, hearts, and deeds manifest themselves when people desperately hold onto what they think they know, without any regard for others. In Deuteronomy 9:13-14, God refers to us as a “stiff-necked people” and threatens to eliminate us—to blot us out—for straying from the values of the *Torah* which we seek to uphold. When we are so stiff-necked that we steadfastly hold onto our need to be right, refusing to listen with compassion, and closing ourselves off from hearing other points of view, we are in danger of making rightness so important that it eclipses the very values we celebrate and cling to. And when we place our opinions above our values, we risk turning the need to

be right into idolatry, destroying everything we stand for.

We may be powerless with regard to what is happening in Israel and Gaza, but our voices (and their silence) do affect what is happening in our own community. Our tradition teaches us to respect one another. We need to find constructive ways to speak to each other—through facilitated conversations, viewing and discussing films, and inviting in speakers. And we need to learn to listen, no matter how painful or “outrageous” we think of the views of others. Our teacher Rabbi John Rayner (z”l) wrote these words in *Siddur Lev Chadash*:

*O God of truth, make us honest
in the quest for truth, even
when it goes against our
favourite prejudices. Make us
brave in speaking it, even when
it goes against the fashion of the
day. But teach us also to respect
the right of others to seek the
truth in their way, and to come
to different conclusions. For
they may be right and we may
be wrong. Or we may both be
partly right and partly wrong.
And when we disagree, may we
disagree charitably, in mutual
respect and love. Let our*

controversies be like those of Hillel and Shammai: for Your sake. Let them be motivated only by the desire that Your will may be understood, and Your purpose advanced. (p. 305)

May we enter the new year of 5775 seeking opportunities that challenge our assumptions and enable us to hear other voices. And may we receive what others have to say with respect and right action, compassionate words and open hearts. *Kein y'hi ratson* – may it be God's will.

NEW BWPJC Website



www.bwpjc.org

Miranda Harris

BWPJC website has been redesigned and updated and is full of useful information. Members have a private area that has all Synagogue related information available to download.

To access the members area, visit www.bwpjc.org/members and follow the instructions.

Current schedules, classes, and programme details are available to view. We now have an online calendar (our previous Elonim) that will be updated regularly.

Regular synagogue communications and information will now be made up of:

1. The Website: general community information, calendar, useful contacts etc.
2. The Wednesday Update Email: last minute reminders and information.
3. Alonim: the Synagogue Magazine for articles and comment for and from members of our Community. Available on the website, by email and by snail mail for those who prefer.

The Community also has a Facebook Group.

Research and Policy Coordinator, University of Bristol Students' Union



My Working Life

Jeanette Monaco (Ben-Shlomo)

You could say that my working life story hasn't taken a traditional straight-forward path, but looking back I can see how my education and career choices connect and make sense. I'm hoping this will offer some reassurance to those young people who are now embarking on or finishing their further education and may just be feeling a bit overwhelmed about how to proceed.

While at school I had a strong interest in art/graphics, but later decided to study English. I finished my degree (1989) as a mature student and carried on working in the printing industry (art/prep production) in which I

had been working full-time before university and part-time during my studies. The pay wasn't bad and it was 'safe' work until I realised I wanted more of a challenge after graduating.

At the age of 27 I moved myself to London and worked in desk-top publishing. I eventually worked in corporate design at a Chelsea public relations company, but later tired of this world and trained in Art and Design secondary school teaching. I secured a great first teaching job and loved it, but this too was interrupted when Yoav was offered a post at the University of Bristol and we moved on. I was three months pregnant with Elie and saw it as an opportunity to start new again.

After a not-so-fun supply teaching stint (while still pregnant) I then wondered what challenge I would set myself next. For some reason I thought it would be fun to embark on a part-time MA (Visual Culture) that

would start when Elie was three months old. I managed to finish with academic success just before Eva came along. My tutors encouraged me to teach in higher education and progress to PhD, which I eventually started when Eva was three. Not without its difficulties and interruptions, I carried on teaching and studying and completed by 2007/2008.

I did what most early career academics in that position do: carried on teaching/researching/writing with lonely attempts at publishing while applying for permanent lecturer posts, all during the time of major cuts in higher education. I gave myself a time-frame and eventually took a different direction.

I dropped teaching and sought more varied research work. This approach, with its potential to exploit today's much applauded 'transferrable skills', was a winner. I enjoyed the range of research and became much more

employable outside of the subject-based teaching/research path.

I now work at the University of Bristol Students' Union as the 'Research and Policy Coordinator'. My success in this area draws a lot on my corporate, teaching, PhD and later research experience.

I have lots of autonomy in this role yet enjoy the support of working in a team. The projects are always student-focused, evidence-based, varied and require lots of creative, well-planned proposals with clear outcomes. It has become a great way for me to still engage with students and issues in higher education, while also making a difference to the student experience.

Henry Harris

1933-2014

Ruth Squire

Steve Harris

Dad was born in London in 1933 but soon moved to Brighton, starting a lifelong love of the sea. His period in Brighton is marked for time immemorial - If you watch the film of 'Brighton Rock' you'll see him as 'man on wall with girlfriend eating ice cream'.

He did National Service during the 1950s in Africa. It was as a chef in the army that Dad began his love affair with food.



We spent most of our childhood summers in Brighton visiting our grandma and grandpa with Dad. Our grandma gave us cold tea to drink (she was limiting the risk of spillage). Memories of those times with our dad are sepia tinted ones of us dodging the rainclouds, peeling the tar off our feet and being the only ones on the beach in sub zero temperatures.



Dad was a founder member of the Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation - a community which has given so much to us and to Miranda and Simon and all four of our children. Other founding members who worked so hard for the community were Mavis and Peter, Joe Schapiro and Neville Lewison who we remember well. They managed to buy a small building and there was a working party every Sunday to lay the floor and put up walls. It was the 1970s so wood chip was obligatory. Neither of us have seen so many Jewish men so good at DIY in one room since.



Dad was always very involved and, as the congregation flourished, he taught at Cheder, was Treasurer and Chair. We are so very proud that Dan, Alex, Mia and Jake are now the third generation of the Harris family attending a Synagogue that might

not be there without our Dad. In honour of him, we take our roles at Synagogue very seriously and do our best to help out where we can. Ironically the next job is to get the wood chip off the walls. Dad was always very aware of people around him, wanting them to feel included and settled. Both of us have heard stories from other members of how, decades earlier, Dad had made them so welcome it had contributed to them joining the Shul and choosing Bristol as a place to settle.



'meals on wheels'. If you had ever been in the car with Dad you'd be a little surprised as he treated the island like his personal circuit of Brands Hatch. Any food arriving on the plate was a bonus. Dad had a gusto for everything he did and loved to make new friends. It is that zest for life and everything in it that we most treasure and remember.

Henry Harris will be sadly missed, not only by his family, but also by many others whose lives he touched.

Dad and Doreen moved to the Isle of Wight 16 years ago so that they could be by their beloved sea again. They would swim every day rain or shine.

On the island Dad and others again established a small Jewish community, Dad was Treasurer and Chair as he had been all those years ago in Bristol. He also helped run the horticultural society as well as singing in local choirs and getting involved in am dram.

Just a few years ago on the Isle of Wight Dad helped to drive for



THE BULLETIN

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A member of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues

140th issue

July - August 1973

Tammuz - Av 5733

Chairman: Mr M Bogod, 11 Bramble Drive, Bristol 9 tel 683874
Vice-Chairman: Mr D Wolfe, 8 Laudemann Circus, Weston-super-Mare 24839
Secretary: Mr H Harris, 6 Antrim Road, Henleaze, Bristol 6 621399
Treasurer: Mr J Antrich, 8a Elton Road, Bristol 8
Foster-rabbi: Dr David Goldstein, 28 St Johns Wood Road, London 01-286 5181
BULLETIN Editor: Mr A Reese, 25 Ryder Close, Dursley, Glos 4394

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The Bulletin May & July-August 1973 - The first Alonim

Some weeks ago Henry Harris sent us scanned images of two issues of The Bulletin, Alonim's predecessor.

Henry, himself, was secretary at this point.

Note the venue for the services was Friends Meeting House in Redlands. No synagogue yet.

Also see the suggestion that members equip themselves with copies of the 'new' HHD siddur - Gates of Repentance.

140th issue

page 2

SERVICES

Services are held on Friday evenings at 8 pm. and on the first Saturday of each month, at 10.30 am.

All services are held at the Friends' Meeting House, Hampton Road, Bristol 6.

Friday	July	6th	Tony Reese
Saturday	July	7th	Jo Schapiro
Friday	July	13th	David Wolfe
Friday	July	20th	Michael Bogod
Friday	July	27th	Frank Wallace
Friday	August	3rd	David Wolfe
Saturday	August	4th	Michael Bogod
Friday	August	10th	Tony Reese
Friday	August	17th	no service
Friday	August	24th	Jo Schapiro
Friday	August	31st	no service
Saturday	September	1st	Jo Schapiro

HIGH HOLYDAY SERVICES 573A

High Holyday services will be held as usual at The Friends' Meeting House, as follows:

Wednesday	September	26th	Erev Rosh Hashanah
Thursday	September	27th	Rosh Hashanah Morning
Friday	October	5th	Kol Nidrei
Saturday	October	6th	Yom Kippur

For these services, we shall be using the new High Holydays prayerbooks 'Gates of Repentance'. Have you ordered yours yet? If not, contact the Hon Treasurer, Jeremy Antrich, 8a Elton Road, Bristol BS8 1SJ.

Everybody is invited to coffee and biscuits after each Friday service. Details will be announced at services - would intending hosts please ring Hilary Kay at Bristol 624276

WORLD CONGRESS OF FAITHS

At a small meeting in Clifton College Council Room on June 11th, the Bristol Branch of the World Congress of Faiths was inaugurated. The World Congress of Faiths is an organisation concerned with "awakening and strengthening of spiritual values" which aims to "break down the barriers of exclusivism and to build bridges between faiths". The Bristol branch will be holding meetings to achieve these aims with members of as many different faiths as possible. If anyone is interested please contact Mr Polack, tel Bristol 34694, or the Rev Marcus Braybrooke, The Rectory, Upper Swainswick, Bath, tel Bath 89220.

The Annual Week-end Conference of the World Congress of Faiths will be held at St Matthias' College, Fishponds, Bristol on July 20th -22nd, which will be followed by an All Faiths Service at St Matthias' College Chapel on Sunday July 22nd at 3pm to which all members of the public are warmly invited to attend.

History in the making.



OTHER JUNE EVENTS:

THE GARDEN PARTY was a great success: about 50 people came and this time the weather was kinder to us. We were able to use the garden for our stalls and sidehows, and the children made full use of the swimming pool. Everyone enjoyed themselves. Many thanks to Dr and Mrs Newman for the use of their wonderful house, and to all who helped to make the afternoon such a success.

Our MUSIC EVENING at the Kanarick's went very well: we hope to have another before the High Holydays. There are some new tunes and a number of old ones which we usually forget from year to year - if anyone is interested in another meeting to have a "sing-song" please let me know.

Tony Reese.

It seems we were always a sociable bunch, enjoying spending time together both in worship and purely for pleasure.

 Have you ordered your copy of Gate of Repentance yet? see page 2.

Picnic at Dodington. July 8th. Various members of the Congregation will be making their way to Dodington House and Grounds (Adventure Playground as well) on Sunday July 8th. They will probably get there sometime around midday and stay for the afternoon. No organisation, just a pleasant afternoon. Along the M4 towards London until Exit 18 - just off the Motorway towards Stroud (A 46)

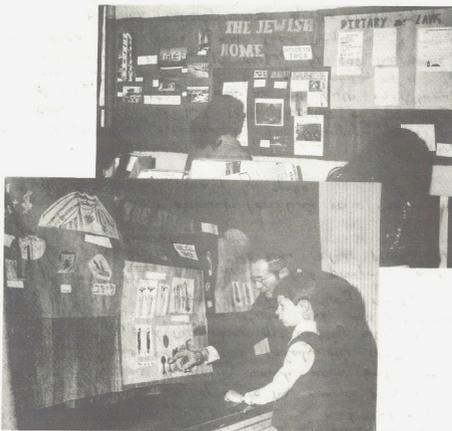
COME ALONG

ULFS PROJECT COMPETITION

On April 1st the Religion School went to London for the First ULFS Project Competition with our entry (- 3 scrolls depicting the Jewish Home through the ages. The competition was very successful. There were many entries of a very high standard from schools and classes as well as individual work. Our entry gained second prize in the schools class.

And our children were always central. It must have been very challenging to create displays that were easy to remove and store from week to week.

How wonderful that Henry chose to send us these just when he did. We're only sorry he didn't get to see the Bulletin reprinted in Alonim.



Photographs by courtesy of Pamela Fletcher-Jones and ULFS News.

Rolling On

This article was previously published in the 'Bristol Post'.

Peter Brill



As the wheel of life turns towards another Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah), I am starting to look for the brakes with increasing urgency. Apparently, as one gets older, the years pass faster. Having rolled through 'middle age' - whatever that might be these days - the runaway train is gathering speed.

At one end, my children are growing up rapidly. At the other, my parents are celebrating 90+ birthdays. Meanwhile, I'm trying desperately to keep my own mortality at bay with ridiculous cycling challenges and the pretence that I can still play football - OK, I play in goal, but us 'keepers are the unsung heroes!

With age comes serious questions to be asked and conversations to be had. I am lucky enough to be part of a close-knit family with a large network of relatives. On the whole, we support each other and offer advice, safe in the knowledge that, at some point in recent years, we

have all gone through similar experiences.

In fact, I find myself replaying the same conversations with members of Bristol's Jewish community, along with friends and acquaintances from a variety of other cultures and faiths. As a result, two things have become clear, regardless of social status, religious belief or geographical location: we're all getting older and there's nothing we can do to stop it; supporting our loved ones is never straightforward and often challenging, even when offered with the best of intentions.

Over the past year or so, I have been faced with some very difficult conversations about life and death, love and relationships, money and possessions. Many have related to my own immediate family, but some have been with friends who themselves are struggling with similar issues. In almost every case, the conversations have been challenging, usually emotional and often inconclusive.

Being a 'glass half full' kind of guy, I have always tried to offer or take something positive from each discussion. If nothing else, I have very quickly come to realise that I

am not alone. Around the family, community, city, country, world, similar conversations are taking place every day with people saying: “that’s *exactly* how I feel” or “yes, that’s happening to us too”.

While there are rarely any right answers, one can only hope that by sharing these challenges, the best possible decisions can be reached and the wheel of life can roll on over the bumps in the road.

My Creative Life

By Lisa Sachs

I have been sculpting since I was 13 years old. My sister Kim Sacks had a pottery studio in our garage at home, and rather than throwing pots on the wheel, I started to make pots by hand out of slabs or coils. I soon discovered that I preferred sculpting the human form.

I went to King David Primary School in Johannesburg, where I did a lot of art, but my sculpting only really took off when I went to the Art, Ballet, Music and Drama Secondary school. Unfortunately, despite having lots of ballet students who had lovely figures and would have made wonderful models, we were confined to sculpting birds, animals and flowers. Not very exciting for me as I was captivated by the beauty of the human form. I concentrated on portraits, also known as portrait



busts.

I moved to a sixth form college as I had decided I wanted to study medicine rather than architecture, after reading the Autobiography of Dr Jack Penn, famous South African plastic surgeon and sculptor. I took sculpture as a separate subject and obtained a distinction in Art when I completed my studies. This helped me gain admission to medical school, as having a strong outside interest, not scientific, was seen as an advantage in training “well rounded” doctors.

My medical studies took a slight

detour into a Bachelor of Science degree because I failed a half course in Bio-mathematics and was told to “go and prove myself elsewhere” before I would be reconsidered for re-entry into medical school. At this stage my father felt my intention to study medicine was ill-founded and since he felt I had a “G-d given talent” that I should go and study fine arts. Not your typical Jewish father. Furthermore, he exercised his opinion financially and said that “if I didn’t do as I was told, he would no longer participate financially in my education”.

To cut a long story short, I finally got back into medical school three years later, armed with a Bachelor of Science degree. I continued to sculpt during all this time and financed my medical studies with student loans and by doing portrait busts of a couple of my professors each year. I also had my work exhibited in the top commercial gallery in Johannesburg, but when they discovered I was training to be a doctor, they insisted I give up my course (as I wouldn’t be able to meet the demand they would create for my work), or come and remove my work from their gallery. Of course, I collected my work and continued with my medical studies.

People often asked me if studying anatomy helped me with my art - I said no, but being an artist helped with my study of anatomy as I already knew how to look at things very carefully.

Many years later, I qualified as a plastic and reconstructive surgeon. My father was very pleased and finally, I think, realised I was doing the thing I was meant to do. I chose both art and medicine and finally married my two great interests.

I now work as a plastic surgeon and by day I sculpt the human form in flesh at work, and at night and on weekends I sculpt the human form in Clay.

I’m sure that my three dimensional perception as sculptor is a great asset in my work as a plastic surgeon as I have a good sense of aesthetics and visual harmony.

I have a portrait bust in the Royal College of Surgeons of Professor Averil Mansfield, the first women professor of surgery in England. It is also the first portrait bust of a woman surgeon in the Royal College London.

Board of Deputies

David Jewell,
Board of Deputies
Representative



Two meetings of the Board since I last wrote, in June & July, and what a striking contrast the two represent – ‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times’.

In June we met at the College of Surgeons in Lincoln's Inn Fields when the three Jewish teenagers had been abducted but had not yet been discovered. Everything on the agenda dealt with Jews in the UK and our relationship with the wider world.

We started with reports of discussions with the Methodist Conference, the RIBA, and the University of Sussex's student union, all of which have been engaged in the campaign of disinvestment in Israel. Deputies were able to report varying degrees of success. The problem with the disinvestment campaign is that it supports and can tip over into covert anti-Semitism, and that is why the Board is doing such an important job in combating it. The president

rather aptly finished this discussion with a quote from Jeremiah: ‘Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the Lord in its behalf; for in its prosperity you shall prosper.’ (Jer 29: 7)

All of this is happening against an ugly backdrop of undoubtedly rising anti-Semitism in Europe. We were reminded that there had been a large increase in the votes for far-right (and sometimes overtly anti-Semitic) parties in the European parliament elections. Alex Brummer reported on the shootings in Brussels and France. He had been to a gathering in Brussels where he had learnt, chillingly, that the community there had not been surprised; there had been a 15 year build up to the event. A deputy talked about his attendance at the Herzliya conference, where global policy is discussed (<http://www.herzliyaconference.org/eng/>). We learnt that four Israelis, all members of the government, expressed three distinctly different views, thus completely confusing the Chinese delegates, unable to make out how government is possible in such circumstances.

Finally we were treated to a fascinating account of Jews in Latin America – as many Jews in

Argentina as in the UK; difficulties in Venezuela; and five Jews in the cabinet in Chile. On being asked why there were so many Jews in her cabinet, the prime minister apparently replied 'Oh are they?'

As for the July meeting the less said the better. At the time hostilities were continuing in Israel & Gaza, but, apart from serious and sombre comments at the beginning, including an impressively inclusive prayer from the president, it managed to be entirely inward looking. There was supposed to be a vote to admit Yachad to the Board, but

with a packed agenda and an intention to go and join a vigil at the Israeli embassy, someone suggested deferring the vote for the next meeting, only the vote that eventually approved deferral took an unconscionable time. There was then a slightly acrimonious discussion on the accounts, followed by a discussion around a new constitutional structure – the kind of Byzantine debate that leaves most people tearing their hair out. High spot was a plea from the floor for the honorary officers to be sent on anger management courses.

On Hiring Consultants

Jane Clark



Hiring consultants is a risky business.

When do people hire consultants? When the consultant has knowledge or skill that you need but don't have. King Balak felt that he needed someone to lay a

curse on the Israelites because he was frightened of them – and like many managers, wanted to deal with a problem on the cheap.

The world is not short of consultants who make a good living out of people's fears. The good news that they have the kind of expertise that you require. The bad news is that you lack this expertise. This means that you cannot judge whether they are going to be any good.

How many of us know how good our dentist is? We end up using proxy means to judge how good they are. Do they have a good chairside manner? Do they hurt? Do they keep to their schedule? Is the waiting room nice or bleak? Are the receptionists professional-looking, or do they look and act like extras from a horror movie? Above all, we take our cue from how confident they are.

I have done my share of engineering consulting, certifying structures as fit for duty. You don't always get the jobs you want. I would occasionally be pressurised to certify a structure that, frankly, I thought was well dodgy. I used the oldest trick in the book to get rid of unwanted customers; I would bid a ridiculously high price for the job. They usually went away.

King Balak (Numbers 22-25) was an equally unwanted customer. He was undeterred by the fee the magician Bilam required. There is a curious incident where we see that actually Bilam's donkey is a better seer than he is. King Balak's people saw this incident, but did not spot the warning sign. Bilam said time after time that he was not sure he could help. That

was also kind of a clue. There was no reassurance, "Don't you worry sire: I'll curse him good and proper for you." *Au contraire*, Bilam warned the king many times about his doubts, and made sure that the king paid a very heavy price for each curse.

Not only was no curse forthcoming, but Bilam blessed Israel so resoundingly that we still repeat his blessing at the start of Shabbat morning services:

לארשי, דיתנכשמ; בקעי, דילהא ובוט המ

*Mah tovu ohalecha, Yaakov;
mishcenotecha, Yisrael*

*How good are your tents, Jacob; your
tents, Israel.*

And of course Bilam suffered the classic fate of the consultant with an angry customer: the king refused to pay and sent poor Bilam packing.

There are two morals of this tale. First, if you hire an expert, be careful and do not ignore clues that the expert may be a little

weak in his field. Second, most professional experts have to answer to regulators: I to the Engineering Council, solicitors to the Law Society and so on. Bilam's regulator was no less than

G-d himself. Experts have reputations to maintain; and they will often take more notice of the regulator than of the customer.

Messianic Jews – A response to Jane Clark

Judy Goldsmith



The article on Messianic Jews, by Jane Clark in the Summer 2014 issue of Alonim, raised some interesting questions about the identity of Messianic Jews.

My extended family has a member who is a 'Jew for Jesus'. I have spoken to him. He was raised Jewish but became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. No-one in the family knows how to react.

I was once asked by a group of Messianic Jews to lead a Seder for them. Whenever I have hosted a Seder at home I have included non-Jewish friends who are interested in learning more about Judaism. None-the-less, I declined this request as I did not feel comfortable with it. My Christian partner was also bewildered by

this request.

However, I also believe quite strongly that people should be able to label themselves as feels right to them. If this applies to gender and race, perhaps it should also apply to religion. I know that I would not be recognised as Jewish by the ultra orthodox, despite being raised as a Jew because my mother wasn't Jewish and I only have a Liberal conversion. As a child I remember being baffled and hurt that I would have qualified to be killed as a Jew by the Nazis but couldn't have a batmitzvah.

I guess the question ought to be, "Does them calling themselves Jews whilst believing that Jesus is the Messiah harm us in any way?" Clearly this chap wasn't hiding the fact that he was a Messianic Jew on the website, so would someone who wasn't a Jew believe that he was Jewish. Would they think that Jews believed in Jesus as a result of his advert?

On the One Hand; On the Other Hand

Effie Romain



I once went on an art course that was all airy fairy but was really based on jogging your brain out of its rut when you drew. So after I had offered to do some drawing at Dean Field I thought I would try the experiment with our crew. It was very interesting. You do a drawing with your right hand - giving yourself maybe 10 minutes. Then taking the same subject you draw it with your left hand.

Simple enough - yet do you know how many of our community are left handed?! We got along fine and the left handed people went on to work with their right hand - not I am sure the way neuro scientists expected this to work - but fun and we had some lovely results.

Jacob Harris did some lovely drawings and is very talented. But he is also left-handed. And do you know the right handed drawings did have a different flow.



Jacob left, then right

Nigel is right handed and did exactly what was asked of him and the results I thought were splendid. The first was drawing was a bit laboured and niggly (this proved the case) but the second was flowing and beautiful and executed whilst he sat amongst loads of children firing water pistols all around him. Some karma there.

Nicky moved into a sunlit world of flowing trees.



Kalev's wife Kate, who we were meeting for the first time, found a similar change of style emerging in the left handed versions. Thank you to everybody who tried -Sheila and Vicky (Vicky I apologise you actually saw me' re-cycling 'one of yours).

We were not expecting any Michelangelo's but we did see another aspect of drawing.



More examples by Jacob





Community Weekend, 2014 Dean Field, Gloucestershire



Lamdeinu

Ruth Weinberger,
Head of Cheder



Lamdeinu academic year begins with a few changes in store. As of September, Lamdeinu will run from 10am – 12.30pm, giving the teachers a better stretch of time to give their lessons without the constant need to rush through the material; this also is in line with the results of a survey we conducted across the other LJ communities, most of whom already run a similar schedule. This will enable teachers to fulfill our goal “To instill in our children pride in being Jewish and to provide them the knowledge to express their Jewishness with confidence.”

Since seeing the benefits of Laurel’s hard work in Aleph and subsequently introducing the Rosenwasser program for Bet and Gimmel which also saw fantastic results, I spent much of last term scouring the internet for a curriculum that would better suit our needs. I also spent significant time reviewing the results of the

survey we sent to the LJ communities across the UK and analysing the various programs communities have chosen to use. Finally, just a few weeks ago, I found one that I think is a perfect fit for our community. All of the teachers have reviewed the curriculum and all are happy with the selection.

As of September, we will no longer use the LJ curriculum for Religious Studies, but will instead use the Chai curriculum. The Chai curriculum is divided into three sets (all of which we will cover during the course of the year): Torah (*the five books of Moses*); Avodah (*worship and work*); and, G’milut Chasadim (*acts of loving kindness*). During Hebrew class we will continue with improving our Hebrew reading and spend time practising writing. For those children that have advanced with their Hebrew, we have purchased a Hebrew program called Hineini – Shabbat morning prayers.

Rabbi Monique and I are working together to fill the 13 Mitzvot and Youth program with a well-rounded variety of classes and sessions. We are looking for help with coordinating the logistics of the program.

All children will receive and decorate their own Lamdeinu book bag on the first day of term; this bag will be used for drinks, snack, and homework/papers to be carried to and from home. BWPJC will no longer be providing snacks at break time to serve the dual purpose of accommodating those parents who would prefer a healthy or

specific alternative while also reducing costs to help address the synagogue's existing operating deficit.

The teachers are looking forward to a new year with a new curriculum to teach our young members of the community.

Ba'alot tefillah

Congratulations to Lisa Saffron and Nicky Spencer-Hutchings (both seen centre) on passing the lay leadership programme . We look forward to many exciting services led by them.



Your Synagogue Needs You...



Karen Warren, Treasurer

We have had previous articles talking about the need for volunteers to perform mitzvot but Council have also had a focus recently on the finances of the synagogue. These make alarming reading. Even leaving aside the building work carried out in the last couple of years we have been eating into reserves. If it was not for the generosity of one particular member then, at the current trend, we would have used up our reserves in the next about three years. Clearly it is not a tenable position to rely on one member for our financial well being and even with his generosity, we have been running at a loss for the last few years.

There are various ways in which you can help. We are aware that the subscription for BWPJC is amongst the lowest for member congregations of Liberal Judaism so reluctantly Council will be recommending a larger increase to subscription levels at the 2015

AGM. If you want to be involved in this decision, make sure you attend in January!

A number of better-off members have told us that they are higher rate taxpayers and increased their subscription to allow for the fact that they can reclaim part of this from HMRC. Others have kindly increased their subscription by amounts varying from a few pounds to several hundred pounds. Any extra you can afford will help reduce our deficit. If you are used to paying through a standing order for ten months of the year, you might like to consider continuing those payments for the remaining two months.

Some members, whose circumstances are not as good, are given a discount on their subscription. This should be agreed in advance with the Membership Secretary and the Treasurer. If you are in difficulty please contact the Rabbi, the Membership Secretary or the Treasurer (contact details on the back of Alonim) and we can discuss a reasonable subscription for you to contribute. All such conversations are treated in confidence. We do ask that those

who receive a discount on their subscription make some sort of contribution to the synagogue in another way, perhaps by volunteering their time. There are a large number of ways in which you can help, not all of which involve visiting Bannerman Road and we would be happy to discuss ways to help both with members who receive a subscriptions discount and with those who don't.

Given the shortfall in our accounts, Council have decided that one of the charities for the 2014 Yom Kippur appeal will be the synagogue. Please do give generously to this and the other two causes in the appeal.

Donations to the synagogue come with a tax benefit meaning your donation is worth even more to us. And in some circumstances, you and your family can benefit too. You will also be performing the mitzvah to give tzedakah. A number of people help by very kindly not reclaiming expenses. If you give me the receipts for any such expenditure then assuming you're a taxpayer, I can include these payments in the gift aid reclaim. Any one-off donations or regular giving are, of course, also

very welcome.

If you are a taxpayer, make sure that the synagogue is aware of this so that we can include your donations in our annual gift aid reclaim to HMRC. This involves no work for you apart from a very simple form telling us your name and address and confirming that you are a taxpayer. If you are a higher rate or addition rate taxpayer you can also claim some of your donation back through your tax return.

You might like to consider giving a donation when you have a family (or other) event. You could also think about leaving the synagogue a legacy in your will. This will come out of your estate before inheritance tax, potentially reducing the liability to your estate.

Finally, please note that we have a new Finance policy in order to keep more control over expenses. Essentially, there is a requirement to get prior approval for all expenses over £10. There are however a number of exceptions for which pre-approval is not required. The policy is available on the BWPJC website or contact me for a copy.

CST is the Community Security Trust, a charity that provides security for Jewish communities throughout Britain.

CST is also there, 24-hours a day, for those of us who are unfortunate enough to suffer, or witness, anti-Semitism.

We want our communities to lead their Jewish lives with safety and confidence, and invite you to join us.

CST draws upon a proud tradition of British Jewish self-defence, in which British Jews come together to play their part in



defending their community. Before and after World War Two, the threats came from far right sources. Today, those threats remain, but they have been joined by more modern forces, including jihadist terrorism, such as that by Al-Qaeda and others.

It is CST's job to ensure that British Jews are protected from these hatreds and extremisms, but this requires a real partnership between CST, local communities and synagogues, and the Police. We are extremely fortunate that this partnership is in place and our local representatives and the



CST and our Jewish life

London (Head Office) 020 8457 9999

Emergency 24-hour number 07659 101 668

Manchester (Northern Regional Office)
0161 792 6666

Emergency 24-hour number 0800 980 0668

CST_UK Community Security Trust

www.thecst.org.uk

Community Security Trust is a registered charity in

England and Wales (1042391) and Scotland (SC042391).

Report Anti-Semitism & Suspicious Activity

CST is a charity that protects British Jews

from Anti-Semitism and related threats.

Please report any Anti-Semitic or suspicious

activity to the Police and CST.

Please Play Your Part by:

- reporting information to us
- joining our local teams
- helping to fund our work

Dates for High Holy Days

Services will be held at BWPJC, 43-47 Bannerman Road Easton, Bristol

Slichot

7:15 for 7:30pm
Saturday, 20th September

Erev Rosh Hashanah

7.15 for 7.30pm
Wednesday, 24th September

Rosh Hashanah

10.15 for 10.30am
Thursday, 25th September
Family service starts at 10.30am
Chavurah lunch after the service
Tashlich at Snuff Mills at around
2.30pm

Kol Nidre

7.15 for 7.30pm
Friday, 3th October (Fast begins at 6.17
pm)

Yom Kippur

10.15 for 10.30 am
Saturday, 4 October
Family Service 10.45am
Musaf (Additional) Service at 1.15pm
Meditation Session at 3.00pm
Mincha (Afternoon) Service at 4.15pm
Yizkor (Memorial) Service at 5.15pm
Neilah (Concluding) Service at 6.15pm
Havdalah at 7.30pm
Communal breaking of the fast at 7.15pm

Erev Sukkot 7.15 for 7.30pm, Wednesday, 8th October

Sukkot 10.15 for 10.30am Thursday, 9th October

Erev Shemini Atzeret 7.15 for 7.30pm Wednesday, 15th October

Simchat Torah 10.15 for 10.30am Thursday, 16th October

community have long worked
closely together.

It is teamwork and we want
everyone to be in the partnership.
Please contact our local CST
representative and ask what part
you can play in supporting our
local security teams. We need to
share responsibility, together.
This means understanding why
we do security and cooperating
with our local teams. CST can
only be as strong as the

communities we serve.

Sharing responsibility also means
keeping a healthy sense of
perspective. Physical and political
threats do exist, but that should
not stop any of us from
appreciating and celebrating the
overall excellence of Jewish life in
Britain today.

We thank you all for playing your
part.

Yom Kippur Appeal

Rambam Hospital, Haifa

Linda Hurst

Up until 18 months ago I had never heard of the Rambam hospital in Haifa. That is when Robert was helicoptered there after his accident, and I was reluctantly catapulted into the world of this extraordinary hospital.

For those who don't already know, it is a hospital in the Bat Galim neighbourhood of Haifa, and is the largest medical centre in northern Israel. It was established in 1938 during the British Mandate and is named after the 12th century physician-philosopher Rabbi Moshe Ben-Maimon (Maimonides), known as the Rambam.

Rambam medical centre has become a world leader in mass trauma and casualty treatment and treats more trauma victims than any other hospital in Israel. Its percentage of trauma survivors is the highest in the nation.

Its nurturing ethos ensures a

positively-charged environment that contributes to patient morale, strength, and wellbeing.

It promotes universal access to increasingly effective, less invasive medical treatment through scientific research and innovation, to the benefit of humanity.

Medical care is provided to patients from Gaza and the Palestinian Authority year-round. At one point in July this year, hospitalized patients included three adults and eight children from Gaza, and three adults and two children from the Palestinian Authority. Additional patients from Gaza were scheduled for treatment.

According to Yazid Falah, the coordinator for Palestinian patients coming to Rambam, *"Despite the security situation, and despite the fact that both sides are fighting, all continues as usual in the realm of medical co-operation; even in times of war we continue to receive patients and give them the care they need - children and adults alike."*

As I did my daily 20 minute walk to the hospital, I observed my fellow-travellers and it was obvious that Haifa is the home of Jews, Christians, Muslims and Druze - religious and secular - an

example of tolerance and co-existence for all of Israel and the Middle East. Rambam's medical community reflects this spirit via warm relations with the local community and aims to serve as a bridge to understanding between all peoples.

My experience as a patient visitor to the intensive care, high dependency and neurological wards demonstrated to me how nationalities from all over the world have come together under one roof, both as professionals and patients, respecting individual dignity, cultural differences, and placing the human condition at the

heart of care.

Support is much needed to enable them to continue their work, by training tomorrow's health care professionals to pursue medical and scientific excellence, and to treat their patients with dignity and humility. To say they daily perform miracles is, in our experience, a huge understatement. I hope you will seriously consider including the Rambam hospital in your Yom Kippur Appeal contribution. Think of your gift as one of hope and healing, extending from Northern Israel to the rest of the world. Thank you.

Yom Kippur Appeal Camp Simcha

Miranda Harris

Thank you for supporting Camp Simcha as your Kol Nidre appeal charity. Our family is one of the ones they support, and Miranda asked me to tell you a bit about them from a personal perspective.

"If you go to the Camp Simcha website their mission statement says "Camp Simcha exists to improve the quality of life of

children suffering from cancer or other life threatening illnesses. Our mission is to ensure that no such child, anywhere in the UK has to suffer without us."

But what does that mean in real life? I can't speak for others but I can tell you how it is for us.

I am a single mother to two beautiful girls, both of whom have cerebral palsy. Nix, who is seven, is classed as having a life threatening condition due to her unstable epilepsy and complex medical issues. She is the reason that we are a Camp Simcha

family. Addy is four and is less affected, though still fairly significantly, but she's got the added complication of being a sibling to a profoundly disabled child, and that's not easy.

Camp Simcha offers us various kinds of support. We have a Family Liaison Officer (or FLO) who keeps tabs on us – she checks in on us regularly and is like a friend that you really *can* call at any time or ask to help out - without feeling bad about it. Our FLO always visits when Nix is in hospital (usually bringing lunch or treats for me J), she's attended several appointments with us to help out with Addy – or just to keep me company. When Nix had major surgery last year, our FLO was there to keep me sane while she was in theatre, and a few days later brought my mum and Addy up to the hospital so they could visit us. Camp Simcha also funded a wheelchair-accessible mini cab for them to visit us a few days later, too. Simple things but hugely helpful and saved a lot of stress in an already stressful situation. They'll provide cabs for hospital appointments and treatments too – we tend to drive but have taken advantage of that a few times, and for some families it's probably an absolute lifeline.

Then there's our "big sister" – a

Camp Simcha volunteer who visits regularly to play with the girls, giving me a bit of a break and giving them lots of attention (which in Nix's case means lots of cuddles!). Again, always willing to come to hospital appointments to relieve the boredom, always willing to help out wherever they can.

Possibly the biggest thing that Camp Simcha does for us is helps us to create memories – good ones. Amazing ones, actually. They organize the most incredible events – parties, Summer playschemes, outings – all with wheelchair-accessible transport provided if needed, which I have to say is a really big deal for us! Last year, three days after Nix came out of hospital post-surgery, we went to their Chanukah party. I have a photo that probably sums everything up – Nix looking grim, asleep, with Addy grinning next to her, in front of a huge bouncy castle, holding a donut that was almost as big as her face I wouldn't've taken Nix out to any old party, she really wasn't up to it, but I knew she'd be OK as I was right next to her the whole time, whilst a volunteer took Addy off for fun – so we got to go as a family, each of us doing what we needed to do.

Talking of fun, there's the annual Retreat, which is three days of

staying in a luxury hotel, eating masses of food (they take their own Kosher caterers), being entertained. We're not talking basic entertainment here - we're talking parties with crazy golf, bouncy castles, popcorn and ice cream machines, trips to the seaside, fantastic craft activities, themed dinners - even helicopter rides! Volunteers are allocated to each family (very often their usual "big sister") and will quite happily occupy the children all day, giving the parents a chance to relax, chat - or do all sorts of activities arranged for them (go kart racing this year, I think). They provide trained carers where needed too, for example to tube-feed a child or administer medication so that the child can join in with activities. And there's always a doctor or nurse around just in case. I tend to stick with my girls rather than doing the adult stuff - I like to see them enjoying themselves, I'm a bit over-protective of Nix to be honest, and Addy's not quite ready to go out without me - but Camp Simcha totally respects that and lets me do as I please, giving me the help to be able to make sure everyone has a good time. And gradually I am letting go - this year I let our volunteer babysit for the girls while I went

downstairs for a proper grown-ups only dinner. On our first Retreat, our FLO brought dinner up to our room and we sat eating it while the girls slept!

And with all those amazing activities, Camp Simcha knows it's important to have tangible reminders too - there is always a photographer at events, so we always get lots of pictures - even a whole book of them from retreat. Such a special reminder of good times.

It's not only about the children having fun, Camp Simcha also recognizes the pressure on us parents - there's a regular Mums' support group where we can get together for a chat or offload, there's a Spa Day where we mums get pampered for the day ... I'm pretty sure there are Dads' events too, but to be honest I don't know about them!

So, in a nutshell, for our family, Camp Simcha offers us fun, memory-making times and the physical and emotional support to enjoy them. They are there for us through the not such fun times too, offering us that same emotional and physical support. And the really amazing thing is that we are always made to feel that WE are the ones doing THEM a favour - by letting them help us,

by letting them share in our enjoyment. I do admit that takes a bit of getting used to....

Such lovely people, such a great organization. But the stuff they do doesn't come cheap – and they don't cut corners; they go the extra mile to raise that extra smile (sounds trite but actually it's true

– perhaps I should suggest they use my words in their next fundraising campaign?!) So thank you for any donation you can give that can help them to continue to do what they do. Camp Simcha will really appreciate it - and so will our family!"

The Elephant, A Sermon

Rabbi Monique Mayer



My family has an elephant.
It's in the lounge.

Most of the time it's sitting alone, waiting for us to come home, hoping for some attention.

I can't talk about the elephant. It's taboo in my family.

Its presence is distressing, and grandma says that pretending it's not there causes less pain than talking about it.

We try to ignore it.

It makes noises. It stomps its feet. It occasionally wraps its trunk around one of us, until we shrug it off.

Most of my family gets quite emotional about the fact that it's there.

I said it's taboo, but – really – we're afraid to talk about it.

No, that's not right. Some people in my family want to talk about it because the elephant has become an obstacle, getting in our way as we try to get on with what we need to do, occasionally having to push it out

of the way to get into a cupboard, or sit at the table.

Family sing-alongs are easy because the elephant knows the best songs. But when we finish, we smile and laugh and then, suddenly, someone points at the elephant and there is silence again.

No one is sure exactly how the elephant got there in the first place, but now it's grown so big that it won't fit through the front door. It's gotten so big and my family avoids talking about it. And you know what we're *not* talking about is the elephant.

In the corridors, sometimes my little sister whispers to me about the elephant and asks questions, only to be silenced by other family members who say, "We don't talk about the elephant in this house. Leave the elephant outside." Except that's a bit difficult given that the elephant is *inside* – and closing our eyes or turning away doesn't change the fact that the elephant is still sitting there.

One day a friend comes and observes what is happening. Our family dynamics are confusing. My friend says, "Can't you see the elephant? Maybe you should find a way to talk about it. Maybe someone can help you. After all, this kind of elephant requires more resources than you have." As these words are spoken, the elephant sprays water on my head. My family smiles nervously.

Big brother pats my friend on the head and says, "It's best for everyone to ignore it. If you are going to stay friends with my sister, you should learn to ignore it, too." The elephant snorts and eats some of the wallpaper.

My sister adds that the house won't be safe if we talk about it. The elephant roars and knocks me over with its trunk.

My friend helps me onto my feet and says good night as she walks out the door. The elephant roars again and stomps its feet-- it's having a

temper tantrum.

“Shhh,” I say. You’re not helping.” The elephant stomps its feet and hanging pictures crash to the floor.

“Shhhhh,” I say more firmly. “Don’t make trouble for me.”

The elephant trumpets and then falls silent at an extremely loud zipping noise. Slowly, my family, the elephant and I turn to see a gaping crack in the wall.

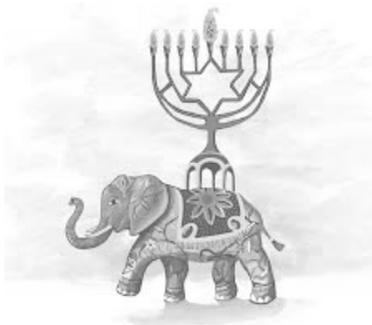
My father opens, then closes his mouth again.

I open my mouth, and start to sing:

Kol ha'olam kulo, gesher tsar m'od. V'hayikarlo l'fakheid clal.

All the world is a very narrow bridge.

But the most important thing is not to be afraid.



Don't forget, if you want to receive a print copy of Alonim you must send an email to Sheila Brill on alonim@bwpjc.org requesting to be included on the print list.

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